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685 or fields, though there is a feeling (not very strong) that *Thyak-dum*[9] will protect the houses to which he is attached. Lepcha economy is founded on the supposition that people do not steal and that no precautions are necessary against theft; consequently when thefts do occur they are particularly disquieting. There is no social apparatus for discovering the unwitnessed thief, or for forcing a confession; in such cases recourse may be had to supernatural powers, in the form of malicious sorcery. Malicious sorcery can in theory be directed against a personal enemy, but all the instances that I heard of were directed against unknown thieves.

754 Both lamas and Mun have traditions of malicious sorcery, of
● 756 getting devils to plague a man or devour his soul; but Mun are
793 considered to be less expert in the matter, taking a month while a lama should only take three days. The Mun are said to work by feeding a particular devil until it is contented and grateful, whereupon it will do whatever is asked. Lamas have two methods; the most learned can summon the victim's soul in the form of an insect and destroy it ritually, whereupon the victim dies at once, or they can summon a devil and hand over the victim to him. To kill a particular person by sorcery it is necessary to have some of their 'dirt'[10]—that is hair clippings, finger nails, or clothes that have been long worn; in the case of an unknown thief a portion of the stolen object, or of some other object which had been in long association with it is desirable, though not essential.

To kill the soul of a person an altar should be erected in the home in front of which is placed a plate covered with rice flour or very fine ashes; around this is arranged a fence of twelve pieces of wood inscribed with the victim's name arranged in pairs meeting at the top; inside the fence is the man's 'dirt' wrapped up in a piece of paper inscribed with his name. The lama then waves a stick with a piece of cloth on it and summons the victim's soul, which will presently arrive in the form of some winged insect; if the man is innocent the insect will not pass the fence but will go straight to the altar and worship there; if it settles on the plate it can be killed, whereupon the victim will immediately die.

To give a person over to a devil the proceeding is somewhat different. The victim's dirt is wrapped up in a piece of paper which

[9] See Chapter Two, pp. 74–75.

[10] The collective noun, used by Lepchas to indicate the exuviae, the portions of a victim's body or clothing which can be used for malicious sorcery, is *mari*, which means literally 'body dirt.'

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CHAPTER SEVEN

RELIGION I: LAMAISM

[*Lamaism, or, as it is sometimes called, Mahayana Buddhism, is a subject of the greatest complexity, to the study of which scholars of world-wide repute have devoted their whole lives. Its organisation is as elaborate as that of the medieval Catholic church, its hagiology, demonology and ritual are infinitely more complicated, and it is split into nearly as many sub-sects as contemporary Christianity. My ignorance of Tibetan prevents me discussing it in any great detail. Among the Lepchas of Zongu the practices of lamaism present more variety of detail than any other single facet of their lives; my notes on lamaist ritual far exceed those on any other subject. I had at one moment considered comparing the lamaism as I saw it practised in Lingthem with the accounts given by other people of more orthodox practices in unmixed lamaist communities, but even confining myself to those rites at which I was present, I soon discovered that the bulk of the material involved would be out of all proportion to its place in the social and religious life of the Lepchas. I have therefore limited myself to a generalised account of the impact of lamaism on the life of the Lepchas of Zongu; in practically no instances have I given the details of ritual or of the fabrication of ritual objects, not because I do not know them, but because they would overweight what is from my point of view a subsidiary subject. To a lesser degree these remarks also apply to the rituals of the Mun and to the extremely elaborate mythology and folklore derived from both religions. Possibly in the future (I hope with the collaboration of Mr. C. J. Morris) I may publish the full details of the ritual and belief of both religions in a different work.*]

i

The discussion of the Lepchas' religion is rendered extremely complicated by the fact that they practise simultaneously, and without any feeling of theoretical discomfort, two (or possibly three) mutually contradictory religions: of these the older Lepcha

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771 religion is nameless but, on the analogy of lamaism, I propose calling it the Mun religion (after the title of the priests); the worship of
● 756 the people of Mayel, which was possibly originally separate, forms nowadays a part of the Mun religion; and this religion is in all its major beliefs opposed to lamaism. For the Mun priesthood goes by the possession of a manifestation of a supernatural spirit which is attached to a family line, so that there can never be more than one simultaneously in each group (there may be two in one biological family, one spirit descending from the father's group, and one from the mother's). The chief function of the Mun is to ward off the misfortunes and illnesses caused by devils, which is done, partly by sacrifices, especially animal sacrifices, and partly by direct communing with the supernaturals. On certain occasions the Mun become possessed by their guardian spirit and prophesy; at death ceremonies they summon the soul of the dead man to speak his last wishes through their mouth, and then conduct it into the *rum lyang*—the place of the Gods—where it is reborn as an infant, and grows up to an eternal life similar to the life here on earth.

771 In lamaism on the contrary priesthood and sanctity are acquired by learning and not by inspiration; the sacrifice of animals is a
779 heinous sin; the future can be learned by calculations from the holy books and not by inspiration; the soul of the dead wanders for a short time in a sort of purgatory, before being reincarnated either in another form on this earth, or going to some heaven or hell, as different as imagination can make them from anything experienced on earth. Most important of all, lamaist ethics are founded on a belief in individual destiny and a sense of sin; lamaism contains a long, explicit and detailed list of sins which can be performed by human beings, and which are visited on the evil-doer, first by feelings of remorse and secondly by punishment either in this life or in future reincarnations. Lepchas have a word for sin, because they have borrowed the Tibetan word, but they have, I think, no idea of sin; and the only act to which the word is commonly applied is to the killing of animals; by a few who have accepted lamaism it is also applied to envy or slander, expressed in thought, word or deed. With these exceptions they do not use the word 'sin,' *la-yo*, in connection with individual behaviour; the supernatural sanctions which punish disapproved-of actions are expressed as *nam-toak*, a year of disaster which affects the whole community. Even for acts less violently disapproved of, which

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incur supernatural dangers, it is not the wrong-doer alone who is involved, but the whole of his family group; punishment is seen if members of a person's family die or suffer, even though the evil-doer survives himself. Indeed according to Lepcha ethics it could be said that anti-social acts are graded according to the number of people they may affect; only for acts of minor importance is there personal and individual punishment which falls on the evil-doer.

On some subjects there is agreement between the two religions, notably on the ambivalent nature of supernatural beings; in both religions the supernaturals are divided into three categories, mostly benevolent, neutral, and mostly malevolent. The supernaturals which are mostly benevolent are called gods, *rum*, those mostly malevolent devils, *moong*; but both agree that if the gods are displeased they take on a terrifying and threatening aspect, and that the best way to deal with devils is to flatter them temporarily by treating them as gods; and whether gods or devils are prayed to the ceremony always ends by begging them vehemently to *go away*. Whatever their chief aspects the supernaturals are potentially dangerous. The ambivalent supernaturals, such as *Thyak-dum*, or Hlamen Djémé (a lamaist supernatural equated with the Mun spirit), are called either *moong* or *rum* according to the personal dealings of the speaker with them at that moment.

Lamas and Mun are also agreed on the meaningful and prophetic character of dreams. The dreams of everybody are significant for those who have the knowledge to interpret them; the significance lies, not in the actions of the dream (as a rule), but in the seeing of certain objects which have a symbolical meaning. The causation of dreams is however different for the two religions, as is to some extent their interpretation; for the Mun dreams are sent by supernaturals, for the lamas they are the experiences of the soul released from the body by sleep; unbound by space or time the soul has experiences with the souls of other people, supernaturals and objects, and, on its return, informs the body it inhabits. For the Mun the soul is a very vague concept, practically only having an independent existence after the death of the body; the lamas however know all about souls.

The content of dreams can be divided into two classes; those that foretell some future 'natural' event, and those that foretell the presence of some, usually dangerous, supernatural. For the latter some apotropaic ceremony is usually available and in some cases essential; according to the supernatural indicated the ceremony will be performed by a lama or Mun.

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essential; according to the supernatural indicated the ceremony will be performed by a lama or Mun.

The following objects seen in dreams are lucky: gathering sand, collecting wood, seeing a woman with a big goitre: they foretell a good harvest; to put on new clothes or gather firewood or to have stones thrown at you mean the acquisition of property. Solid excreta indicate a good buckwheat harvest, liquid ones that the harvest will be destroyed by storms. To be covered with filth indicates coming wealth. To dream of climbing or going up hill is propitious. If you dream you are cut or are given silver it means that you will the next day be given a present of *chi*. The following objects are unlucky: a sick person lying down indicates a bad harvest: a tooth coming out means a relation will die, if from the right side of the mouth a paternal relation, if from the left a maternal; hair coming out or even combing hair also foretells death. A neighbour pounding rice foretells a death in his house. To dream of drinking foretells rain. A lake, swimming, or falling into water all foretell illness. A river foretells a message from the State authorities, agreeable if the water is clear, disagreeable if muddy. To dream that you are excreting in public means that your relations are slandering you. Being naked in a crowd foretells illness, as do dirty or ugly people. The setting sun foretells the death of kings. To dream of the dead foretells illness, to dream of a landslide, death, and also to dream of picking fungus. A dream of a red cloth or red flower means you will cut yourself, to dream of chicken's droppings means that some one is going to poison you. The list could be continued almost indefinitely.

Specially ominous dreams are: to dream of a kite or of men flying (this indicates the presence of Shook-sor *moong* and demands a ceremony by a Mun): to dream of fire (this indicates illness and also demands a ceremony by a Mun): to dream of a storm blowing into your house and lifting off the roof (this indicates that you are the object of malicious sorcery and lamas must perform ceremonies): to dream of going down hill carrying a load (this foretells illness; lamas and Mun can both avert it): to dream of a snake (this foretells danger and needs elaborate lamaist ceremonies); and so on. These specially ominous dreams are fortunately rare, for it would be considered dangerously rash to neglect the proper ceremonies. For less strongly ill-omened dreams it is permissible to make a hole in a leaf of a special species of wild arum and spit through it; this will avert the danger.

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tively Sakya Muni, Guru Rimpuché (beloved teacher), or Tashey-*thing* has been equated with Tak-bo-*thing*, in Mun theology the first man and the first hero, the grandson of Itpomu, the Creative Mother, and the two change places in mythology, according to the preference of the speaker, even in stories quite unsuitable to lamaist ethics (for example in the stories of the origin of eating fish and pork, where the hero kills the original fish- or pig-devil). And the confusion does not end there; after Tak-bo-*thing* and Tashey-*thing* have been telescoped into one person they are again separated into two with two simultaneous births in different places: the Mun hero is said to have been born underground at the same moment as the lamaist saint was born in heaven.

These confusions however are more obvious to the analytical European than to the practising Lepcha. With the exception of the crucial point of killing animals the Lepchas do not appear to be conscious of the implied contradictions; and the lamas through their education in the scriptures and through the casting of horoscopes have already such a training in sophistry that they almost automatically reconcile any implicit contraditions. In by far the greater number of ceremonies for private individuals Mun and lamas perform simultaneously contradictory rites for identical ends, with the Mun usually in the 'kitchen' and the lamas in the 'parlour.' Inside the monastery precincts Mun are never allowed to practise; but in a number of the calendrical festivals on 'neutral' ground the two perform side by side. Only for one private ceremony are the Mun entirely excluded; they can take no part at all in the funeral ceremonies of a lama. On the other hand the Mun have the speciality of most of the ceremonies connected with crops and hunting and some apotropaic rites.

Theoretically there is no quarrel between the two religions, but there is a certain veiled rivalry between their priests. The lamas accuse the Mun of using their supernatural powers for unworthy private ends, for instance killing magically the spouses of people they desire so as to be able to enjoy them without interruption, and the Mun accuse the lamas of being more sensual than the average man, more dependent on constant sexual intercourse and drink; abstention is possible for the layman, intolerable for the lama. As far as drink is concerned I think the charge is justified; the amount of *chi* consumed by lamas is incalculable. As soon as they settle down for a ceremony a *patyoot* is placed beside them, and constantly refilled and renewed; the chanting—and lamaist

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ceremonies may last anything from six hours to as many days—is thirsty work; and in the latter half of the services the officiants are seldom quite sober. These charges are never made openly or by one priest to another; in public they are quite amicable, though they usually affect to ignore the other's presence and performance.

The mythological justification for this amity between the two religions is that the patron spirits are husband and wife: the lamaist Tashey-*thing* is the husband, and the Mun (always a female spirit) the wife. For this reason, it is said, the lamas are stronger, and especially have more influence with the gods; the Mun on the other hand are perhaps more competent to deal with devils.

This attitude towards husband and wife, in which the husband is considered automatically the more powerful, is in itself probably a Tibetan import. For the Mun spirit has also another husband in the Padem (or Bum-*thing*); this latter resembles the Mun save that only men are possessed by it; a Padem is far less powerful than a Mun, and for many men this possession is the first step towards becoming a Mun. In the case of this supernatural husband and wife it is explained that the Mun is the more powerful because she is the wife; and this is far more congruent with the specific Mun mythology in which the female supernaturals are almost always the most important.

It would require far more knowledge than is at present available to be able to state definitely of the Lepcha folk-lore what elements are indigenous, what borrowed from Tibet, and what from other neighbouring tribes. My impression is that by far the greater number of stories told in Zongu, though many have foreign accretions, are of domestic origin. I only heard specifically Tibetan-lamaist stories from pious lamas, and by no means always from them.

ii

It is said that lamaism was introduced into Sikkim in or near 1641, the date of accession of the first lamaist king Penchoo Namgyé. He is said to have been made king by three lamas of the Nyingma-pa or 'Red Hat' sect, the unreformed branch of lamaism; these three lamas were fugitives from Tibet, following the violent struggles between the Yellow Hats and Red Hats and possibly Chinese or Mongolian intervention.

I have not been able to find any conclusive evidence as to the date of the conversion of the Lepchas to lamaism, or of their admission

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CHAPTER EIGHT

RELIGION II: THE MUN

i

As opposed to lamaism the Mun religion carries with it no social organisation; the Mun and their parallel priests are simply individuals who, through their possession by a spirit, have certain gifts and duties; unlike the lamas and the civil officers their position carries with it no sort of title in ordinary life. Besides the Mun three other types of priesthood by possession are recognised; these are the Padem, the Yaba, and the Pau. The Mun spirit is a female spirit, the other three are male. They are attached to family lines and are roughly hereditary; they often descend from grandfather to grandson or from grandmother to granddaughter; but there is no regularity about this and a man may inherit a possessing spirit from a woman, and *vice versa*; once the vehicle dies the spirit may not choose another body immediately and large groups may be without the possessing spirit for a number of years. The manifestation of the spirit (for the spirits themselves live immortal beyond Kinchenjunga) may choose anybody for its vehicle, with one exception; none of the spirits will enter a lama or his own children, though they may enter his family.

Both men and women can be Mun, but only men can be Padem (or Bum-*thing* as they are called outside Zongu); these are both pure Lepcha spirits and are essentially similar, save that the Padem are far less powerful, and that instruction by an already qualified Padem is optional, whereas for Mun a three year course of instruction is obligatory. Padem are weaker than Mun and capable of exorcising far fewer devils; they cannot prophesy nor perform the death ceremony. For many men Padem is the first step to becoming Mun; in Lingthem there are altogether eight Mun[1] of which four

[1] They are (men) Katel, Gongyop, Thyak Thimbu (Gongyop's elder brother) and Agyung (the adopted son of Serving): of these Gongyop practises regularly, Katel occasionally, the other two hardly at all. (women)

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●756 are men; of these three were first of all Padem. Kurma is Padem only; he can diagnose but can only perform a few sacrifices and exorcisms.

The other two groups of possessed priests resemble one another and differ from Mun and Padem in so far as neither can make sacrifices nor perform exorcisms, but can merely get possessed by supernaturals; they dance until the supernatural speaks through them and discloses its wants and whereabouts. Both wear special [292] clothes for their performances: the Yaba (women are called Yama) wear bandoliers of tinkling bells and have their clothes fringed with bells; they hold a metal plate and beat it as they dance. Pau (women are called Nandjému) wear elaborate wool head-dresses and dance with a skull-drum in one hand and a bell in the other. Both Yaba and Pau are and have been very rare because the possessing spirits are not Lepcha but have been introduced through inter-marriage with foreign women, the Yaba spirit comes from Limbu women (the Limbu are a Nepali tribe) and the Pau from Sikkimese-Tibetans. There is a tradition that there is a similar spirit called Jhankri belonging to the Chetri,[2] but this spirit has never manifested itself among the Lepchas as there has been no inter-marriage between the two groups.

There is only one representative of this group in Lingthem: the 'elder grandmother' of Patek, an old woman over seventy, is a Nandjému. The service of these diviners is only called in when lama and Mun fail to agree on a diagnosis, or when there is reason to suppose that a new devil has taken up its abode in the neighbourhood. In such cases a Pau or Yaba, usually from another village, will be called in to discover its home and its needs.

754 It is believed that there are two sorts of Mun, a good group
756 called Tang-li Mun and a bad group called Mun-mook Mun; the difference is similar to the traditional difference between white and black magicians. 'Mun-mook Mun are like thieves: they think and do evil and are possessed by devils which they employ for their own selfish ends; they alone can send devils (the term used for sorcery).' They are believed to have an influence like the evil

Pumri (wife of the second Dorjé Lapoon), the elder wife of Lumba *chithembu* (she is the daughter of Pumri and has the paternal spirit) the 'younger grandmother' of Patek, and the sister of Jiroong (the wife of Kaji). All four women practise.

[2] This Lepcha tradition is incorrect: the Chetri are a fairly pure Hindu tribe; the Jhankri occur among the Gurung.

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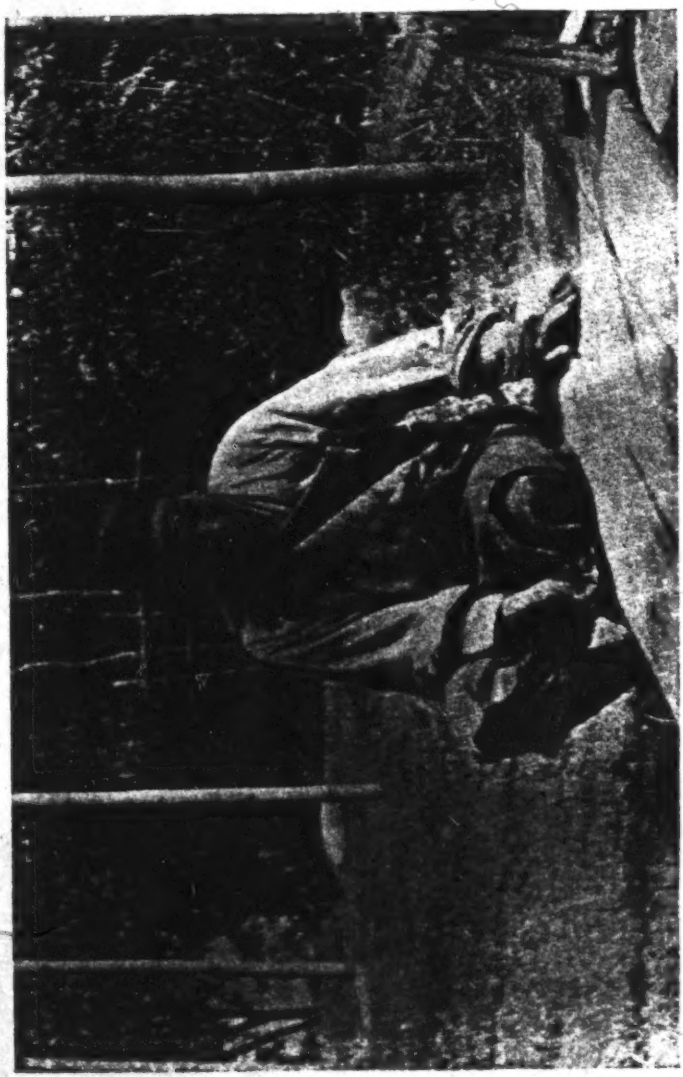

THE MUN GONGYOP

[facing p. 216]

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754 eye. On the other hand 'When Tang-li Mun sacrifice they do so
756 with benevolence in their heart towards the people and houses to which they are summoned.' It is thought that none of the Mun now inhabiting Lingthem are evil, though one lived there about a score of years ago; there are however some in other villages. The type of Mun a person becomes depends on his or her teacher, and not on the possessing spirit.

159 I think the best way of describing the possession and functions
756 of a Mun is to repeat the description of his spiritual life given by Gongyop. For the greater part I was not able to take down his exact words, for he speaks extremely quickly and very easily falls
[195] into the sing-song rhythm of a Mun's invocation, often saying the same thing twice or four times in different words, rather after the fashion of the Hebrew psalmist. He uses onomatopoeic words a great deal, many of his own invention. He has a prodigious memory and once started goes on like a clock-work machine; but if he is interrupted his train of thought breaks down and he cannot extract one point out of a sequence for elaboration.

Gongyop is far more in demand than any other Mun in the village; he officiates in nearly all the ceremonies except those which are performed in families of which a member is a Mun. When sacrificing he falls into what is almost a very light trance; his eyes become glazed and unfocussed as he intones his rhythmic chants. He is a man of forty-six, with a rather whimsical and wild-eyed expression and very small and expressive hands. He is easily amused and laughs freely. He is very nervous and jumps perceptibly at any sudden sound, a thing no other Lepcha does; he is aware of his peculiarity and ascribes it to a fall he had from a bamboo when he was thirteen. After that fall blood spurted from his ears and he couldn't see and for a time lay like one dead. Three years later he had another fall, but was not hurt much and climbed the tree again. Nowadays he says he can't climb big trees; if he were to do so he would feel giddy. Even in normal life he suffers from giddiness; 'his eyes turn' and he can't see properly. He can't walk along a cliff; the ground feels as though it were moving up and down, nor can he walk among big trees for he feels that they are going to fall on him. He has frequent unpleasant dreams of
[152] falling down or flying down. I did not come across similar nervousness or anxiety among any of the other Lepchas whether Mun or laymen, and such instability is in no way essential for a Mun.

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Even for a Lepcha Gongyop is preternaturally shy and I had to woo him very assiduously before he would talk to me. But I found with him as I did with others that once his confidence was gained he was willing to talk absolutely without reserve. Indeed one day I had to run away from him because I had asked him a question about his divining necklace; he explained in great distress that if he told anybody the full details about it he would loose all the power of divining through it, so please would I not ask him. I changed the subject, but naturally curious, kept glancing at the necklace, and after a little he started to tell me about it. A similar dilemma arose three or four times with Lepchas; it would seem as though once they had accepted you they can neither lie nor prevaricate, and will tell secrets which they will bitterly regret mentioning later. Towards the end of our relationship Gongyop asked me very shyly (for it was, in a way, a confession of failure for a Mun) for medicine for sores: and then he showed me on his shoulder a growth which to my unpractised eye looked like cancer.

Gongyop was the youngest of four children; almost as soon as he was weaned he was adopted by the younger brother of his paternal grandmother in whose house he spent the greater part of his life; recently however he has returned to look after his blind old father. His eldest brother, who was a lama, died with his wife and two of his children in a dysentery epidemic; his two surviving children are Sangkyar, a cretinous defective, and Satéo, who is lame and rather silly. The next brother is Thyak Thimbu; he too is a Mun (he has the paternal spirit, Gongyop the maternal); after him came a sister, now dead, who was married, first to a 'brother' of Dunbi, and then to Kurma. Gongyop became a Padem twenty years ago, the spirit descending to him from his father's maternal uncle who died five years before the possession; he became a Mun five years ago, the spirit descending from his mother's elder sister who died ten years before the possession.

'At the time of the onset of the illness which showed the possession of Padem I had been married for five years and my wife was pregnant; she was later delivered of a still-born daughter. Subsequently we had a son who is still living. I was taken very ill, so ill that I could not eat or drink *chi* or move or even go out of the house to relieve myself; I felt as though I was bound with ropes. After another Mun had recognised the spirit which was possessing me I recovered quickly and was then able to perform all the rituals of which Padem are capable. There is no need of a teacher for the

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work of Padem; the spirit will instruct before each ceremony as to what is needed in the way of sacrifices by means of dreams in which the spirit will be represented by Europeans or Kings of Sikkim and other States. This divination by dream never failed, before each ceremony I would dream the requisite ritual.

'After I had been a Padem for some years I was taken ill again as before, so ill that I lay like one paralysed and all my hair fell out. My senses were confused and I could neither see nor hear properly. By night I used to dream of huge bridges and roads and of myself walking and riding over them to all the countries of the world, Tibet and Bhutan and Nepal and India and Europe. There I would meet people and talk with them in their own language; in the neighbouring countries I would meet and talk to the Kings: in Europe I stayed in people's houses and there were so many houses you could not see the ground. I lay almost like one dead.

'Before I got really ill like this I was acting almost like a madman wandering into the forest and other people's houses; I did not know what I was doing and I did not recognise people. I used to travel about very quickly and not know how I had got to where I was; the neighbours called in the Mun and Padem but it was no use.

'When I lay ill the Mun and lamas exorcised unavailingly; but finally a lama recognised that I was troubled by the Mun god and he told me that I must make her my private god. The lamas then divined who was the most fitting person to perform the ceremony of *Rum keuk* (recognising the god) and decided upon an old female Mun who lived some way away. She came and a sacrifice was prepared consisting of a tray covered with offerings of dried fish and dried bird and ginger and pop corn and rice and other crops and various sorts of *chi*; this she offered to the gods saying in *tang-bor* (circumlocutions) that she was making these offerings for the invalid and would the gods please accept both them and him. An ox was then killed and she took away the intestines and the head and two legs; she was also given Rs. 5 but she gave them back and only took them for herself when I was fully instructed. When the Mun had made her sacrifice she fed me with *chi* by hand and she put a silver rupee in my hand and a ceremonial scarf round my neck and said to me "From today the *rum* will be with you and you must learn all the work of the Mun". She stayed three nights and then returned home. From that day I started recovering;

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two days later I was able to go outside the house and within a month I was strong enough to go and visit the Mun. On my first visit I took with me a load of *chi*; I used to pay her visits of varying length—five, ten, or fifteen days, according to the amount of time necessary to learn completely one sort of ritual or story—and I would return home to meditate upon it before proceeding further. I studied in all three years before I could be given *loong*.[3] I had to know the history of every devil and how to exorcise it as well as the story of creation and the birth of Tak-bo-*thing* and many things more. During my training I was not allowed to eat pork or goat or chicken or hen's eggs for if I had there would have been devils I could not have controlled. At the end of my three years' training when I had got my *loong* my teacher had all the forbidden foods boiled and put in a basket; then after she had given me *chi* and butter to drink and a ceremonial scarf she told me that now I had power over all the devils and could eat all forbidden foods, after which with her own hands she gave me three mouthfuls of each sort of food. When I was given my *loong* a second ox was sacrificed; the first time I was so weak that I had to stop indoors while the sacrifice was made.

'Until I got my *loong* I could not officiate as Mun but I could continue to do so as Padem; there is no quarrel between the Padem *rum* and Mun *rum* as they are husband and wife respectively and are pleased to inhabit the same body. They do so however comparatively rarely as no woman can be Padem though she may be Mun and a man can be Padem without being Mun, and *vice versa*. A person like myself can call down Padem *rum* or Mun *rum* at will; before possession the Padem *rum* does not call down the Mun *rum* to visit him though he is pleased when she comes. The spirits are not permanently present in their dwelling;[4] they come down from their home, which is reached from a passage beyond Kinchenjunga, when they are summoned. When they do come down the vessel which receives them feels as though bowed down by a heavy weight.

"The Mun only takes full possession of this vessel twice a year, once in the hot season and once in the wet season. This is a big ceremony and elaborate sacrifices are made. The day before the sacrifices I start feeling ill; I feel heavy and pressed down and cannot bear any noise; I tremble constantly and am covered with

[3] See Chapter Seven, p. 196.

[4] Gongyop constantly referred to his body as the *li*—the house of the spirits.

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THE CHERIM CEREMONY I

Above : The Mandal and Gongyos (arm only) fill the containers of the *rum* offered to the devils with milk and tea.

Below : Pumri offers strained *chi* in a cup to the gods of Kinchenjunga. Old Kahlyeu, on her left, offers grain.

[Facing p. 220]

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● 756 sweat. I pray to the gods to let me off and I offer them *chi* and incense in preparation for them to wait for the true sacrifices. The next day the ceremony is held inside a house and many people are present. I sit down cross-legged in front of the offerings. Besides the ordinary offerings there is a wreath of flowers and a flower-bedecked stick. When I sit opposite these I feel as though a heavy burden were pressing over my shoulders and as if my flesh were being poked with sticks—zinga—zinga—zinga—zinga—; suddenly a sort of darkness comes over my eyes, it is as if I was in a dream so that I know, see and remember nothing. But from what other people have told me and from what I have seen when other Mun have prophesied I know what takes place; I put on the flower necklace and take up the stick and go and walk outside in the courtyard. (Were anybody else to put the necklace on me the gods would be angry and the rash man would receive the burden of the gods.) When I return everybody is hushed, even the children. I blow into each person's face and on the offerings; then I scatter *chi* and prophesy in a loud and audible voice the things which are going to take place in the following half-year. After the prophecy I recover consciousness but not till cock-crow the next day do I feel all right again.[5]

'When I am called in in the case of illness the god does not fully enter me but I see the devil which is attacking the sick person either in the form of some animal or insect or person, depending on which devil it is; thus Lum dong *moong* appears as a pig, Sor *moong* as a dirty ragged old woman, Arot *moong* as a red butterfly. I see these visions out of the corner of my eye; if I look directly there is nothing there. But I watch these devils carefully out of the corner of my eye; if they go away without eating anything the patient will recover quickly; but if they take food the patient will probably die though I only tell him that the illness is very serious.

[784] 'A Mun must on no account touch a human corpse; should he do so the god will depart and he will be very ill for two months and lamas have to perform ceremonies to cure him. This is the only occasion on which the spirit will leave a Mun. A dead Mun is buried in the ordinary way and his soul has to be conducted to the *rum lyang* (place of the gods) in the normal manner; the gods

[5] All Mun do this ceremony twice a year (no more and no less) but on different days; informants agree that their prophecies are never mutually contradictory; they are always fairly generalized.

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which have inhabited the live body have no concern with the soul after death.'

Gongyop said on another occasion that he thinks it an unhappy thing to be a Mun. He would have preferred not to have been one himself and he prays that his son will escape the visitation. 'May Tangen *moong* spare my son.' The perquisites do not make up for the illness and the work.

Among laymen it is a very general feeling that it is a misfortune to be a Mun; as well as the psychological and physical distress there is the added fact that Mun are responsible for the killing of many animals; but the Mun themselves say that this sin is not borne by them but by the devils who make the sacrifices necessary.

The onset of possession is described in much the same way by other Mun and Padem also. Kurma who was possessed by the Padem spirit when he was ten said he felt ill and almost mad for three months; he ached so much that he could not move, his body felt as though it were going to burst. He neither saw nor heard properly; he ate little and drank nothing. At times he felt as though he were flying or sitting on trees; at other times his body felt as big as the monastery whereas other people seemed as small as twigs. The symptoms disappeared after diagnosis and acceptance of the Padem god.

I was unfortunately not able to see anybody during these initial phases of possession. During my stay Mrs. Chano was diagnosed as being possessed by the Mun spirit but the sense delusions and wanderings had passed and she merely stopped at home very listless and apathetic. Gongyop performed the ceremony of dedication and was going to become her teacher.[6]

It is worth noting that except for the bi-annual prophecies[7] the Mun do not possess supernatural powers as the Lepchas understand them, and they differ in degree rather than in kind from the laymen; they can always see devils, whereas only some laymen can see them and that only on some occasions; they can always communicate with supernaturals, whereas only certain old and experienced laymen can do so. A great deal of the Mun ritual, as opposed to the divination, can be performed by laymen.

[6] This is described in Appendix III.

[7] And calling up the soul of a dead man and making him speak; but only very few Mun possess this art, and none in Lingthem. See Chapter Thirteen.

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ii

The Mun religion has a very copious validating mythology and theology. The origin of everything in the world, visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, and the changes they have undergone to bring them to their present state are told in a great number of stories of varying emotional importance. Some of the simplest of the 'origin' stories are known and told by everyone; the more important ones require *loong* before they can be told; and the most important of all, the story of creation, is only known in its full details by the Mun; one of the chief parts of their training is the learning of this story, which it is said takes seven whole days in its telling, by heart. By far the greater part of it consists of lists of pairs of supernaturals who produce the phenomena which greet our eyes today.

'Under this world is an ocean; under that ocean is another earth of twelve super-imposed stories, and under that there lives Itpomu, the Creative Mother, and her husband Débu. Their first children were Tak-seu and Tak-from, who are also called Narzong-*nyou* and Komsi*thing*. After them were born Mlum Mukyam, Sakyeun-faat-it, Saba-faat-chaum, Suk-dum-lung-ming and Chi-lel, all of whom are the present earth; Palyou and Pakyam who are gladness and joy; then Ta-lyang, Ta-kook and Ta-kok who are the blue sky without ornament: then Bru-nong, and Jil-vong, Long-mu and Tso-kor who are the forest in the sky where the stars live: then Tak-bru-num and Jit-it who are the stars. The ocean between the two worlds is called lyang-tak-yoor *oong*, tagum-lyang-shin-mu *oong* and is the home of Tal-i-nau and her husband San-go. Under the second earth are two huge copper vessels beside Itpomu, full of water, and under them is a fire; this is the reason why the earth becomes warm and wet. Then was born Panjer-roong and Pantsong-roong which is the Rungit river; then Kum-zer roong which is the origin of hot streams which cure all ills . . . then were born Num-ri and Num-ra who begat the thunder-bird, *sadher*. . . .' The greater part of the story continues in this vein.

Later on in the same story the origin of devils and the creation of the Mun spirit is recounted. This is also a very long story but is far better known than the Genesis. I only propose to give an outline of it.

'The first children of Itpomu and Débu were Komsi*thing* and Narzong-*nyou*; although they were brother and sister they

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THE CHERIM CEREMONY II

The model of Mamoo *moong* with the '*deu*'—the nine-storeyed devil's palace made out of coloured threads—in position down by the *chotes* just before the worship begins. In the foreground are Katel and Jiroong. Behind, Chala Mandal and Lumba.

[facing p. 224]

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verbatim, though not necessarily to an audience, by the Sacrificer on the second day of the marriage feast. I am giving a somewhat shortened version of it in an Appendix,[8] but there are one or two points to which I should like to draw attention. Tarbong-bo, the inventor of marriage, was Itpomu's youngest son, and was still drinking her milk when he saw, desired and tried to rape Na-rip-nom; when he failed in this because he had not given the proper presents his mother sent him to his elder brother Komsi*thing* for advice and help. It will be noticed that there is no sort of transition or *rite de passage* between the child and the boy of marrying age; and that the elder brother, and not the father or paternal or maternal uncle is the natural person for a young man to turn to for help and advice. In the Mun mythology the father is never important; Débu, the husband of Itpomu, is merely a name, without personality or independent existence; it seems possible that he is a relatively modern importation. I think the same is possibly true of Tak-bo-*thing*, the grandchild of Itpomu and the child of Narzong-*nyou* (sometimes his father is Komsi*thing*, sometimes some other male supernatural); Tak-bo-*thing* is simultaneously a supernatural and the first human being and a great number of stories are told about him, chiefly to explain the origin of different human customs; but he is inextricably confused with Tashey-*thing* or Guru Rimpuché, and it seems to me probable that he is to a very great extent a Tibetan import, though probably anterior to the Lepcha's conversion to lamaism.

The chief supernaturals of the Mun are the two feminine deities Itpomu and Narzong-*nyou*. Itpomu herself is never directly invoked; it is always her creations who are sacrificed and prayed to. Narzong-*nyou* is really the chief Lepcha goddess; she is as it were the local God of Sikkim, of the Lepchas' country; she lived in the country and is responsible for its geography, flora, and, especially fauna. She is also responsible for a great number of institutions. Her elder brother and husband Komsi*thing* is also responsible for a number of habits and institutions, but he is in a way a foreigner; after he and his wife separated he took himself to Tibet. Except in the harvest rites the two of them are always mentioned in prayers and sacrifices, together with all the other supernaturals involved. The invocation usually takes hours, for all the relevant gods in all their manifestations, with their wives and their children must be mentioned by name; in private sacrifices

[8] See Appendix IV.

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all the personal and *ptso* gods of the sufferer and his family must also be included.

Apart from the two long 'scriptural' stories there are a vast number of shorter stories which are known by most of the older people and recounted on a variety of occasions. Nearly all of these the Lepchas call *lung-then*.[9] In its general meaning *lung-then* is the word applied to any traditional custom which cannot be neglected, such as the giving of feasts; applied to stories it means roughly 'tales of origin'. All *lung-then* end with the words 'And that is why today . . .' expressed or implied.

Lung-then can be divided into two groups: those dealing with supernaturals and human beings, and those dealing exclusively with animals. The most peculiar feature of the stories dealing with anthropomorphic characters is the preponderating rôle played by the genitalia, which are almost endowed with independent life; various semi-heroic humans and supernaturals possess genitalia of peculiar formation and characteristics, and the adventures of these organs together with the bodies to which they are attached are told in a number of tales. One of these stories I think worth repeating, for it is, as far as I know, unparalleled in any other mythology; it is the story of the Origin of Menstruation. The story is universally known and is repeated whenever the subject is brought up. The story would appear to be capable of two interpretations, both of them congruent with the Lepcha attitude to the similarity and difference between men and women. On the one hand it indicates an extraordinary conception of the equality of men and women, for menstruation is considered almost everywhere as one of women's greatest disabilities. But it can equally well be interpreted as male envy of women and their more conspicuous physiological functions, a deeply hidden envy which can be supported by the Lepcha belief[10] that male intervention is necessary to start the physical signs of female puberty. The story is as follows:

'Originally women had their vulvas on the top of their heads. Then the menstrual blood used to flow all over their faces and it looked so unpleasant that the gods transferred the blood to men's knees; but then, when they went hunting and travelled about the country the blood used to drip everywhere, and Narzong-*nyou* saw this and was displeased thereat. Moreover the gods still did not like the vulvas on the top of the heads, so they called for volunteers

[9] Examples of these and other Lepcha stories are given in Appendix V.

[10] See Chapter Twelve, p. 315.

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to move this unpleasant thing. First one bird was asked to undertake this task and tried, but failed; then the *nambok* bird tried for a year and failed; and then the *mong-klyok* bird (? a sort of bul-bul) said that, given a suitable reward, he would change its position. What reward? asked the gods. The bird asked that when the crops were ripe if it were to eat the grain it should not be driven away but should be let feed freely. This was agreed upon and then uttering its cry "*tabék—tabék*" (*abék* means between) it pecked and pecked and eventually moved the vulva to the forehead; there it stuck and then after a time moved slowly to the nose, the upper lip and the chin; at the chin it stuck a year, then travelled slowly down sticking five years at the navel; eventually it got to its proper place where it now is and where it is hidden. Seeing this hidden place Narzong-*nyou* who had invented menstruation so that people could tell when babies were going to be born retransferred the blood thither. As the *tamtoom* (that is the inevitable result) of this deed the Mongklyok bird has a red spot on its tail to this day as can be seen on all birds belonging to this race.'

As opposed to the stories about gods and humans, the stories about animals do not contain any sexual element at all. On the other hand excretion as a humorous situation or a sign of defiance recurs with great regularity. Outside these stories the Lepchas of Zongu do not consider 'natural functions' funny, and there is a complete absence of the cloacal jokes which form the main part of the repertoire of the puritanical missionised Lepchas. The greater number of the animal stories explain the cause of enmity between two species: they usually start by the statement that 'once upon a time the spider and the wasp (for example) set up an *ingzong* relationship,' but then one broke the pact, 'and that is why today wasps and spiders are enemies.' These stories show a great deal of observation, and many of them are extremely elaborated with a variety of comic situations.

iii

The overwhelmingly greater number of Mun ceremonies are performed for the benefit of individuals, households, or geographical groups of households. Even the prophetic possessions, described earlier, are only for the benefit of the household of the Mun and the Mun-less houses near his; and the calendrical harvest rituals, described in the next chapter, have to be performed separately for

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each household. There are however a few ceremonies when a Mun sacrifices and prophesies for the whole community; but all that I have seen or heard of are adjuncts to lamaist ceremonies.

In the Cherim ceremony which is held twice yearly, once at the beginning of the rains, and again at the beginning of winter, to keep off illness from the community, three separate rituals are performed, two by Mun, and the third by lamas. The communal nature of these sacrifices is emphasized and at least one individual from each household has to be present, and each household contributes a little of the grain. So that the Mun can participate the ceremony is held on neutral ground, when I saw it on March 28th., by the *choten* below the monastery and just outside the sacred precincts.

The first part of the ceremony consists of an offering to the devils: this ceremony is called *rum* after the name given to the chief article of sacrifice. This is a large basket filled with earth and covered with a banana leaf into which are inserted a number of varied articles with eight[11] of each sort of article: 'devil's walking-sticks' consisting of decorated bamboos with flowers inserted in holes, containers of water, milk, tea and *chi*, pieces of mica, stems of wormwood decorated with threads, fresh eggs, heaps of grain, and dried bird, dried fish and ginger. There are also offered two *ta-ming* which consist of long sticks to which are attached wrapped in leaves samples of every sort of food and drink. When the offerings have been made the Mun, sitting opposite them, intones a long chant to invoke the gods, and then takes the eggs and holds them to his forehead while he shuts his eyes and concentrates; the line which he envisages inside the eggs foretells the future health of the community. In the spring of 1937 Gongyop saw 'a fairly straight path' which signifies that there will be a mild epidemic of stomach trouble. Four years ago, when there was a bad epidemic of dysentery he saw 'a curved, almost spiral path, with a knot at the end of it.'

The second ceremony, also performed by Mun, consists of offerings to the Gods of Kinchenjunga and the Plains, and is called Tsandong. The offerings consist of rice, butter, *chimi*, a rupee and eggs. The sacrifice is in two parts; first grain and strained *chi* are thrown out by the Mun and her assistant (in March 1937 Pumri was assisted by old Kahlyeu) and later a goat is dedicated and then killed.

[11] It may be noted that for Mun and lama odd numbers are lucky, even unlucky.

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THE CHERIM CEREMONY III

Above: Mamco *moong* in detail; she is made of buckwheat flour decorated with butter. Note small kite-shaped *deu*, inscribed labels, *nahleut* at the base. *Below:* The lamas invoke Mamoo *moong*. Right on the left is a *chaṭé* table with bowls of water and rice for the gods' refreshment; seated on the left is the second Dorjé Lapoon fingering his rosary; on a cloth in front of him his sacred bell and brass *dorjé* or thunderbolt. Tafoor, who made the nine-storey palace is playing the cymbals. On the right, half out of the picture is lame Satéo, ready to strike the gong. Note the *patyoot* of *chi*.

[facing p. 228]

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These two ceremonies together took about four hours. None of the people present took any notice of either of them. The few who weren't cooking, eating, gossiping or braiding one another's hair, watched the lamas preparing their very elaborate ceremonial objects. The chief of these was the *deu*, the 'nine-storeyed palace' consisting of elaborate regular polyhedra in different coloured threads supported on bamboo splinters through a central bamboo. This 'palace', which took over four hours to complete, is made to mollify the ghost-devil of an old king of Tibet called Dayom; in his lifetime his palace and monasteries were destroyed so that he had nowhere to live; in revenge his spirit roams about harming people. The palace is offered to beg his pardon and to persuade him to return home without hurting the people in the neighbourhood.

This palace however only formed the background of the whole object. The foreground was occupied by an elaborate representation of the female devil Mamoo *moong*, portrayed as a snake-haired female riding on a tiger, and surrounded by hundreds of lesser objects. The devil was made out of buckwheat powder, and it was impressed on the onlookers that any laughter while the buckwheat was being handled would automatically result in a thunderstorm with thunderbolts. When the whole object had been made with frequent consultations of the sacred book the invocation and readings from the scriptures with musical accompaniment began; then an offering of boiled rice and fresh buckwheat bread was offered to all the gods and devils; then the ground was cleared and *cherkem* offered to the devils; then Mamoo *moong* herself was summoned and gratified with the offerings of copper pots and cloths (these are only offered symbolically and are later retaken into use); and when Mamoo was presumed to be in a good temper the *chongbutipkū* round her image were handed out for all to wave over themselves; then the image was taken off the temporarily erected altar. It was getting dark by the time the ceremony had reached this point, and therefore there was no time to carry the image in procession across three streams, accompanied by musical instruments, as should be done; instead it was only carried across one stream that day, and the following two the next morning. If animals have not devoured the image within three days it is a sign that there will be sickness in the coming season; if however they have devoured it in one it is a sign of prosperity. Before the image was taken away the procession was held up while a Mun (in this case Lumba *jethi*) sang an unaccompanied song thanking the gods for their kindness in

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coming when they were invited, and begging them now to go away. On those occasions when singing is called for it is nearly always the Mun who sing, and they possess a considerable repertoire of more or less sacred songs. All these songs are in the minor key, more or less rhythmic, with a great stressing of the last syllable of each line, which is prolonged for several notes, usually in a descending scale. The tunes are not set, and allow of easy improvisation. Songs are often sung at feasts, and always at marriages; they are always unaccompanied. The bamboo flutes which some young men make and play are used entirely as a solitary diversion.

iv

The services of the Mun are continuously necessary in the life of every Lepcha. They must always be present at birth, at marriage they are the only essential priests, and at the death of laymen their rôle is of more emotional importance than the lamas. Throughout life they are necessary for cleansing from supernatural danger, for blessing and solemnising different undertakings, and, above all, for expelling devils.

Ceremonial cleansing is performed by *pék*-ing, by the Mun waving certain objects over the actual or potential sufferer. The objects waved differ with the circumstances; thus in the fifth month of pregnancy both parents are *pék* with a bunch of elephant grass to insure an easy delivery: if labour is difficult the mother in childbirth is *pék* with a live chicken, and, if she or her husband have neglected a pre-natal precaution, with the object which has been wrongly handled or finished. Similarly after an abortion or still-born child has been thrown into the river, a Mun will *pék* the carriers with a bunch of stinging and thorny plants and the parents will be *pék* with a live animal which will later be sacrificed, in order to prevent the devil which has caused one death causing more. *Pék*-ing is employed in a number of circumstances, sometimes alone, and sometimes as part of an exorcism. It is the nearest approach in Lepcha life to ritual cleansing.

Blessings are invoked and pacts solemnised by the ritual of *sakyou faat*, the pouring or drinking of strained *chi* from a cup on the sides of which dabs of butter have been placed. It is not absolutely essential that Mun perform this ritual; any old and experienced man who has received *loong* may do so. *Sakyou faat* cannot be offered by women, except by women Mun inside their own homes, by lamas, or by people in mourning. The ceremony is performed to solemnise a marriage, to set up the ~~ingaay~~ relationship to mark the formal swearing of an oath or before starting any unusual undertaking.

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performed to solemnise a marriage, to set up the *ingtong* relationship, to mark the formal swearing of an oath or before starting any unusual undertaking. It is used in all ceremonies for which a blessing is invoked (as opposed to exorcisms), sometimes alone, sometimes with the *lafét*[12] sacrifice. It is always made privately in each household after the sowing of a field. It is the most solemn sacrament in Lepcha life.

When a Mun is called in to exorcise a devil the most usual situation is as follows. After the specific devil has been divined the Mun spends a night in his own home *munthen*-ing—that is summoning and communing with his possessing spirit—to discover the reason for that particular devil having attacked that particular person, and to learn what sacrifices or ritual are necessary to exorcise it. The question of causation is bound up with the conception of *tamtoom*—the necessary consequence of an earlier act; often this act was not committed by the sufferer, but by fairly remote ancestors. Thus the Mandal suffered from lumbago as the *tamtoom* of one of his ancestors having abandoned a baby in a field-house, where it was burnt to death. A complicating cause, which also accounted for his failure to produce a son, was that the spirit of his first dead wife was plaguing him because, although herself a Mun, she had been cremated and conducted to heaven by lamas (as though she were a nun) instead of being buried and led to a heaven by a Mun. Angered at this treatment her spirit had been transformed into Sabdok *moong* and in this guise came from the *rumlyang* from time to time to plague her husband and to prevent his having any sons. In this task she was assisted by the Hit *rum*, the Mun god who looks after the new-born dead.[13]

Such a *tamtoom* as this is almost impossible to lift but the Mandal did all in his power to persuade Sabdok *moong* and Hit *rum* to lift the curse, making many sacrifices, and even summoning with many presents an old and widely famed Mun[14] from a village two days journey away. Before Gongyop started performing the

[12] See Chapter Two, p. 74.

[13] The Mun worship two supernaturals, Hit *rum* and Dé *rum*, who are considered to be ancestral gods who look after all dead Lepchas. Their positions and functions in the Mun eschatology will be more fully described in Chapter Thirteen.

[14] This man, besides being a Mun, was also a Pau and Yaba. Gongyop, who assisted in the sacrifice, said that he had heard he was a 'black' Mun—Mun-mook Mun—, but he was not able to form any opinion from the prayers he heard him say.

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CHAPTER NINE

RELIGION III: THE PEOPLE OF MAYEL

i

I stated earlier that the Lepchas have two or perhaps three religions. My reason for this statement is that the ritual connected with harvesting and hunting, though performed by Mun, have a number of features which do not occur elsewhere. It seems to me possible that the worship of the people of Mayel, and perhaps of Pong *rum* the god of hunters, is of a different origin to the other Mun ceremonies; unfortunately too little is known about the ritual of neighbouring tribes to enable profitable speculation to be made as to whether either or both ceremonies are relatively modern importations from outside, or whether they are on the contrary the oldest Lepcha customs. The most outstanding differences with other Mun ritual, and indeed with ordinary Lepcha life, is, first, a discrimination against women, secondly, an insistance on virginity for some of the celebrants, and thirdly a suggestion of the danger of menstruating women. Women may perform the sacrifice to the people of Mayel, but if they do so the ceremony is curtailed and fewer objects employed; they not only cannot sacrifice to Pong *rum* but must not even be aware when the sacrifice takes place; and the popped corn and *chi* which are employed in it, if not made by a man, which is preferable, must be made by a virgin girl. The chief offerings to the people of Mayel are the *lafét* sacrifice and *sakyou faat*; the small bird for the *lafét* must be killed by a virgin boy, and the strained *chi* poured into the buttered cup by a virgin girl.

This insistance upon virginity is unparalleled in Lepcha life;[1]

[1] The only other instance is in the sacrifice to a pair of demons who cause a coughing disease (? tuberculosis) and whose presence and ritual were divined and by a Nandjému less than ten years ago. For this ceremony the popped corn must be made by a virgin girl, and the Mun must fast for twenty-four hours before the sacrifice. Only two people know how to perform this very modern importation.

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eleven o'clock he had a bad fit of shivering as from fever, though his pulse was low. He spent the earlier part of the morning talking about his past life and especially about religious ceremonials and his own experiences as Padem. He has three rosaries and can make diagnosis. He never had a teacher to learn how to do this but learnt it through the inspiration of Padem *rum* and also from observing his mother and other Mun. He gave an illustration of the way in which he would consult his rosary in the event of another person being ill. Whether consultation shall be made or not depends partly on personal inclination and partly on wealth. Kurma said he had not consulted for his sick son or for himself because of the expense. About midday he almost collapsed and I had to give him medicine. He says he has been this way for seven days and cannot sleep inside but only out of doors. He has completely lost appetite and when he shivers suffers from optical disturbances; grown-ups look no bigger than children and he sees red and white spots moving about over the ground and has a pain under his heart; a couple of days ago he was really bad and thought he was going to die. No Mun or lama has been called in; who is going to do it? His mother-in-law and nephew are 'strangers' and do not care about him.

He has recently spent seven days with his parents-in-law working for them; it was his first visit for three months. His small son was ill with a discharge of blood from his ears and sores all down one side. At present he is slightly recovered. No professional advice was called in. Kurma says one woman said of the child: 'His father is a foreigner from Lingthem, why bother about it?'

May 19th.

Kurma came up to-day for the first time since the 13th; he walked with a stick and still looked very seedy, sweating profusely. He said, however, he was better and brought a present of eggs and tomatoes for the medicine I had given him; I gave him a lot of quinine and a little aspirin; he took all the latter but only three tablets of the quinine because it was so bitter. He was in a highly nervous state and when there was a sharp noise (either a gun[20] or a bamboo snapping) he jumped several inches and exclaimed in a frightened voice: '*athu lukni lu-li-ko*'—words which I cannot translate and which Kurma said were meaningless; to turn the

[20] There are a couple of very old match-locks in the village which are occasionally used.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

consideration and its neglect would not cause any immediate retribution; but a failure to propitiate the actual spirits might be fraught with all sorts of evil consequences and no one would willingly omit to carry it out.

It is not possible for an ordinary man to have direct dealings with the spirit world, nor indeed would he normally know the cause of his particular trouble. The cause of certain common ills, such for instance as coughs and colds, boils or fever, are, of course, well known to most people, but not the special knowledge required to make the necessary sacrifices to the particular demon which has caused them. For this it is necessary to have recourse to a proper practitioner, either a *Mun* or a *Yukman*, which is the word used by Lepchas to denote a Lama. It seems certain that prior to the introduction of Buddhism into Sikkim such sacerdotal functions as were required by the Lepchas were carried out by Muns. Their services are still much in demand in Lingtem, where they work in close conjunction with the Lamas. In other parts of Sikkim, however, their numbers are steadily decreasing, and the tendency is for all priestly functions to be carried out only by Lamas. In the Kalimpong district (in British India) there are still large colonies of Lepchas, and amongst these people Muns have almost ceased to exist. Such as there are practise almost secretly, for their presence is not welcome to orthodox Lamas.

"A notable feature of Lamaism throughout all its sects," notes Waddell, "and decidedly un-Buddhistic, is that the Lama is a priest rather than a monk. He assigns himself an indispensable place in the religion and has coined the current saying, 'Without a Lama in front there is no (approach to) God.' He performs sacerdotal functions on every possible occasion, and a large proportion of the order is almost entirely engaged in this work. And such services are in much demand, for the people are in hopeless bondage to the demons, and not altogether unwilling slaves to their exacting worship."

The Lamas of Sikkim belong to the *Nin-Ma-pa* or

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

individual members of the community. Unlike Tibet, where animal sacrifice is practically unknown, many of these ceremonies, particularly those in connection with illness and other manifestations of devils, require the sacrifice of an ox or goat, and on such occasions the Lama is assisted by a Mun; for although the Lama has no objection to assisting at such a very un-Buddha-like ceremony he draws the line at actually taking life himself. He is a physician more than a priest, for he deals with the ills of the physical body rather than with those of the soul. Sometimes he is unable himself to diagnose the cause of trouble, and on such occasions he may call in a *Nunjimu*, a person who by dancing herself into a trance is able to ascertain the cause of the trouble, but not to cure it, this being the Lama's own province. The Lama does not, I think, claim for himself any supernatural power. He is merely "one who knows," as the Lepcha word *Yukman* implies, as opposed to the "ignorant one," or ordinary layman. The whole of his teaching is based upon cause and effect; and once a cause has been ascertained its treatment is merely the carrying out of a definite specified ceremony. This conception of course is quite in accordance with the best medical tradition; but it is more open to doubt whether Harley Street would approve of such treatment as, for instance, the sacrifice of a bullock, coupled with a thousand repetitions of the mystic formula "*Om mani padme hum*," as a cure for general debility. If a man calls in one Lama rather than another it is not because he has necessarily more faith in his powers, or thinks he has a better bedside manner, but because he knows more ceremonies: X may have studied only as far as the cure of the common cold; but Y may know how to ensure that your wife's next child is a boy. Either of these treatments would doubtless find favour in Europe; but in the meantime I cannot honestly recommend a pilgrimage to Lingtem for the purpose!

A boy does not usually become a Lama because he feels it is his right vocation but because his horoscope, prepared at birth, decrees it. Every child is born with certain signs, from

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CHAPTER 7

Exorcism and Other Magical Practices

754 IN the wild and mountainous forests of Sikkim "it is fitting," writes Mme. David-Neel, "that sorcery should hold sway. The so-called Buddhist population is practically Shamanist and a large number of mediums: Bönpos, Pawos, Bunting and Yabas of both sexes, even in the smallest hamlets, transmit the messages of gods, demons and the dead."

I have already made a number of scattered references to these people, and shall now try to disentangle the extremely muddled and conflicting Lepcha ideas concerning them.

756 In the first place, it seems clear that prior to the advent of Lamaism in Sikkim the only recourse the Lepchas had to their demons and gods was through the medium of *Mun* and *Padim*. According to the dictionary the former word means a "vagrant singing priest"; it can also be used to denote "an exorciser; or any experienced person." Padim, on the other hand, is given as "one unacquainted with religion and exorcism; or belonging to the laity"; but this meaning was not known in Lingtem. The difference between the two is not at all clear, nor are their powers strictly defined; but whereas both men and women may become Mun, it is impossible for a woman to be a Padim. The position seems to have some points in common with the Shamanism of Siberia; for whereas the Padim's god is male, that of the Mun is female. A Padim has power over certain demons only; but a Mun has power over all. From time to time a Mun becomes "possessed"; but a Padim never. A Padim receives no instruction in his duties; and such esoteric knowledge as he

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● 756 possesses is revealed to him in dreams. Although there were several Padim in Lingtem no one seemed to employ them, preferring always to call in a Mun. The difference between the two seems to be similar to that between a chemist, for instance, and a doctor, the Mun, of course, representing the latter.

756 There is, so far as I know, no ceremony which Mun
793 perform in Lingtem that in a more orthodox Lamaist society could not be performed equally well by Lamas: and while the latter have usurped many of the Mun's functions, at the present time the two work side by side in perfect amity, perhaps because of the equable Lepcha temperament. There is not the slightest rivalry between them, and when a Lama is called in to advise he will often recommend some ceremony for which a Mun is necessary.

756 A man does not become a Mun or Padim by inclination, but because of an irresistible compulsion manifested through some illness. Most of those with whom we talked, although they liked the presents that their patients brought them, would have preferred to be like ordinary men. There is only a certain number in every clan; and when one dies the talent passes on. Thus, although it is possible for a mother and son both to be Mun the talent is not hereditary; nor is it necessary for a man to be a Padim before becoming a Mun, although this sometimes happens.

Gongyop, the most popular Mun in Lingtem, became one only five years ago. He is at present forty-eight, and was a Padim for twenty years before he became a Mun. When he was in his early twenties he was taken very ill; and was weak and listless for a long time. The cause of his illness was eventually diagnosed, and it was seen that only by becoming a Padim could he recover his health. He could eat no rice, nor could he drink *chi;* and his limbs felt as though they had been tied up, and he could not walk. He remained in this state for nearly two years. However, as soon as the cause of his trouble was discovered he rapidly recovered. He became a Padim by the mere performance of the necessary ceremony;

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but later on a Mun appeared to him in a dream and told him what to do. Nowadays he always dreams before a ceremony, and thus learns what action he has to take. During the course of these dreams he speaks with Kings of Sikkim, Europeans, and all sorts of other people. Actually it is a demon who is speaking to him, but it has chosen to adopt this form.

Before becoming a Mun Gongyop was ill for nearly three years, and during all this time lay almost like dead, the symptoms being the same as with his previous illness. He was visited by both Mun and Lamas; and both divined that he was being troubled by the Mun's own private god; and that the only way he could recover was to make this god his own. Part of the ceremony was done by a Lama; but the most important part, known as *Rum-Keuk*, was done by a female Mun. An ox was slaughtered and part of its flesh, together with grain and butter, was offered to the gods by the Mun. She was offered five rupees in payment for her services; but refused to accept any money until Gongyop had completed his studies: she took only the head and two legs of the ox, together with its vital organs. These had formed the actual ceremonial offering. Gongyop did not understand the words she used during the ceremony as she spoke in a special esoteric language; but in any case he was so ill at the time that he could not even drag himself outside the house for the purposes of nature: he was unable to see properly; nor could he hear. He remained by her side during the ceremony and from time to time she waved things over him. Before the actual physical signs of his illness developed he became as one mad. He would wander aimlessly about without knowing where he was going: sometimes he went to other people's houses, and sometimes he would roam in the forest. He never knew what he was doing; nor did he afterwards remember where he had been. Sometimes he had the feeling that he could walk very fast, as though he was being transported on air. He believes that in this way he

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covered immense distances.* During this time he was unable to recognise people; not even his own wife. During the later stages of the illness he used to dream every night that he was travelling all over the world. He believes that in this way he visited Europe, and often went to Tibet and Bhutan. He could speak all languages, and see all things. During the ceremony the Mun, who later became his teacher, fed him with *chi*, put a rupee into his hand, and placed a ceremonial scarf round his neck. She then told him that from that day the Mun's special god would be with him, and that he must therefore learn the work. He started to recover from that very day, and was able to commence his studies almost at once. His teacher stayed with him for three days more, and a month later he went to her home, which was in a village on the other side of the hill, taking with him a load of *chi* as a present.

It was three years before Gongyop was able to practise as a Mun. He did not stay with his teacher all this time; sometimes he remained with her for ten days; sometimes for several weeks: but in between he would try and commit to memory the things that she had taught him. He had to learn the names of all the demons; where they lived, and the various means of communicating with them; also the sacrifice which each demanded. In addition to this he was also required to commit to memory the story of the creation, a shortened version of which I have given at the commencement of Chapter 4. The complete story takes more than

* Mme. David-Neel states that some Tibetan ascetics indulge in a practice known as *lung-gom*. This is a special kind of training "which is said to develop uncommon nimbleness and especially enables its adepts to take extraordinarily long tramps with amazing rapidity. Belief in such a training and its efficacy has existed for many years in Tibet, and men who travelled with supernormal rapidity are mentioned in many traditions. . . . The performance does not consist in racing at full speed over a short distance as is done in our sporting matches, but of tramping at a rapid pace and without stopping during several successive days and nights."

Mme. David-Neel was fortunate enough actually to witness an exhibition of *lung-gom*. I have not myself seen it, nor is it practised by Lepchas, although they would appear to have heard of it. Chapter VI of her book, *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*, which deals with this and kindred subjects, is of great interest.

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three days to tell. Gongyop was very anxious that we should write it down; but the flesh was not sufficiently strong! At the end of his third year an ox was sacrificed, and his teacher pronounced him as fit, although he has still a number of things to learn. He cannot, for instance, do the *Sanglion*, a special rite performed at death. He thinks it a curse to be a Mun, and hopes his son will never have to be one. In his opinion a Lama is more powerful than a Mun; but the latter is probably more efficient when it is a question of merely driving demons away.

I asked Gongyop if the Padim god was angry when he became a Mun. "No," he said, "the two gods are husband and wife, and the Padim god was glad because the Mun had come to share houses (i.e. Gongyop's body) with him. The Padim god does not call his wife, but is naturally glad when she arrives." The spirits are not always present in his body. When they come he feels a heavy burden, as though he is carrying an immense weight. These particular gods normally live in a place on the other side of Kinchinjunga, which mountain they have to cross to reach him. At the time of their arrival he feels a weight pressing him down. When they are in possession of his body he is able to prophesy. At such times he does not know what he is saying, nor has he afterwards any recollection. He cannot call the spirits up at will and only prophesies twice a year: once in summer and again in winter. He generally feels ill the evening before, and only becomes normal again from cock-crow on the morning following the "possession." He feels heavy and depressed; also he cannot stand noise. He trembles all the time and sweats profusely. During this time he must pray to the gods to find out what must be done. He has no particular feelings at the time of possession; but at the moment when the spirits actually enter his body everything goes black in front of him, after which he remembers no more. He sits cross-legged on the floor making offerings; by his side is a necklace of flowers and a decorated stick known as *Sagyi-patung*. Suddenly he feels as though he is being poked all over with

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

● 756 the stick: this is the god arriving to take possession of his
787 body. He is now no longer himself. The god takes up the
776 necklace and puts it on its head. It gets up trembling and goes outside the house, where it walks up and down a few times. It comes in again and sits down in its former place. Everyone keeps very quiet and still; even the children make no noise. It offers *chi* and chants a little. Now it blows on everyone. Very quietly, it begins to speak. Soon, darkness comes over it, and it steals away. The god is gone, having made its prophecy. Gongyop recovers consciousness. Later, the others will tell him what the god has said.

756 A Mun offers sacrifices to Itpumu, who, as we have
782 already seen, was the creator of all things, even of Lamas. The god cannot be approached direct, but only through the medium of his demon children. It sometimes happens that the twice-yearly ceremony, when prophecies are made, is performed by more than one Mun in each village: but even when this is done it is said that their prophecies do not differ in essentials; and apparently no steps are taken to prevent collusion. We were unfortunate not to witness one of these ceremonies; but from what little I have seen I think it is exceedingly doubtful if a real state of trance is ever induced. One or two people were openly sceptical, and said that the prophecies were made in such a low and indistinct voice that it was possible to interpret them almost as one wished: others, however, were reticent. There seems no doubt, however, that they are always confined to generalisations: "although the village is suffering from coughs and colds at present, there is no immediate danger, and the epidemic will shortly cease." Things such as this were commonly said, but they can hardly be called prophetic; and in the meantime I prefer to keep an open mind until such time as I have collected evidence which would be accepted by a scientist.

756 Gongyop says that during ordinary ceremonies, when no
787 god has taken possession of his body, he sometimes sees phantom dogs, pigs, or monkeys coming into the room. If he looks carefully they disappear at once; but the moment he

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

concentrates on the service they appear again immediately. If one of these animals comes right into the room and is seen to be eating something it is a sure sign that the sick person will die. He does not tell the patient what he has seen, but merely contents himself with saying that the illness is serious and that the ceremony may not be completely successful. If he sees a pig it means that Lum Dong Mung is the cause of the trouble: if a red butterfly, then it is Arot Mung to whom offerings must be made. This last is the demon which causes people to commit suicide, and requires careful handling. Sometimes he will appear to see a dirty and aged woman enter the room: this is Sor Mung, which causes coughs and colds.

It is generally believed that Lepchas know a great deal about the medicinal value of plants. In the days when they were dependent upon forest produce this was probably true, but it certainly does not apply at the present day. One would have expected knowledge of this kind to be handed down from generation to generation, and to find it part of the stock-in-trade of the Mun. His cures, however, are obtained entirely by means of sacrifices. He gives no medicine, nor does he prescribe the wearing of charms and amulets, the making of these being the province of the Lamas.

For ordinary divinations a Mun uses either a necklace or an egg. The egg is placed against the forehead, and the eyes are closed. Gongyop says that when he does this it helps him to concentrate. At one ceremony at which we were present he said that by means of the egg he could see a long straight road, continuing into the distance. This meant illness in the near future; but nothing very serious. On another occasion he saw a circular road: this meant serious illness. And once, when he saw a circular road which was arranged in the form of a knot, several people died of dysentery shortly after.

We noticed that he was wearing a rosary twined around his wrist. We asked him what it was for, but at first he seemed very embarrassed, and would say nothing about it. Later on,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

756 787 he said that while there was no particular harm in other people catching sight of his beads he must never discuss them, except with other Padim or Mun. If he did the god would be angry and refuse in future to help him: moreover, he was in the habit of using this particular rosary to determine the outcome of his love affairs. If he talked about it there was a chance that it might play him false! And so he begged to be excused. As he said this he tucked it away, well out of sight.

756 775 It is believed that when a Mun dies his soul returns to its celestial home, where it changes into the god Hit, the guardian of which is Pong Rum, the patron of all hunters.

[764] The body is always buried and not treated in any special way. Even the soul like that of ordinary people needs direction after death, or it will not know which road to take. A Mun must be careful never to touch a corpse. If he did so his god would leave him for the time being, and he would be ill for at least two months. There is no harm in his looking upon a dead body; nor will anything ensue if he touches the bodies of

[783] dead animals. Should he happen by mistake to touch a corpse he must get a Lama to cleanse his body with consecrated water, at the same time burning incense in the room while this is being done. After this he will regain his powers; but nothing, it may be noted, can cause the god permanently to desert the Mun.

757 In cases of illness in Lingtem a Lama is always called in first. He decides what treatment is necessary and then arranges accordingly. As a matter of fact, I cannot remember attending any ceremony, apart, of course, from purely religious festivals, at which a Lama and Mun were not both officiating; a regular Harley Street conspiracy!

756 In addition to Lamas and Muns, Lepchas also have recourse to people known as Nunjimu. This word does not appear in the dictionary: but the verb *Nun* (from which the word is presumably derived), which is Tibetan, is given as meaning "to be insensible, or cataleptic." These people are not nowadays often employed, and in Lingtem there was only one. According to Gongyop the original Nunjimus

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came from Tibet, and I presume them to be descendants of 756
the pre-Lamaist priests of that country. I have never come across them in Tibet; neither does Waddell nor Mme. David-Neel make any specific mention of them.* I imagine that they are now found only in the more remote parts of Sikkim, and possibly in Eastern Nepal.

Nunjimu are always women, and their male counterpart is known as Pawo. There is, however, no difference in their functions. When a Nunjimu dies the talent passes to some female member of the family, that of a Pawo to a male; but in neither case does it necessarily pass from parent to child. As in the case of Mun and Padim a person only becomes a Nunjimu or Pawo by means of illness, through some form of temporary madness. These people work by dancing themselves into a trance, after which they are believed to be able to diagnose the cause of an illness. It should be noted, however, that they never prescribe any treatment: having made known the cause of disease its cure is carried out by a Mun or Lama. Their functions have been to a great extent already usurped by the latter and they are only called in when a Mun or Lama has failed to effect a cure.

Tafoor's youngest child had been ill for several weeks with 756
what was undoubtedly whooping-cough. He had carried out 755
various Lamaistic services and had also called in a Mun. Finally, with unexpected forethought, he sent the child away to a neighbouring village, hoping that the change of air might do it good. In spite, however, of all his efforts the child got steadily worse. As a last resort he decided to call in the Nunjimu. We had tried several times to get this old woman to tell us about her work, but she always refused: and on this occasion she warned Tafoor not to let me know what she was doing, or the spirit would refuse to function. He, however, was a sceptic, and had only called her in at the earnest

* Waddell, however, mentions an inferior type of sorcerer known as Lha-Ka, or "God's mouthpiece." They "are found frequently in Western Tibet, and may be females. They somewhat resemble the *Nan-jorma* [*sic*] and Pawo of Sikkim, but are not devil dancers like the latter."

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request of his wife: but in order not to frighten her I was given a place behind a screen.

When I arrived I noticed that the altar had already been adorned with a number of small rice *tormos*[1] which, strangely enough, had been made by a Mun. There were also several bowls filled with parched grain, which had been specially prepared by Tafoor himself. The Nunjimu was dressed in her ordinary clothes, but on her head she wore a thick wreath made from alternate layers of red and white wool. This is called *Peteuk*. She was alone in the room, and was sitting cross-legged on the floor, with her face towards the altar. To one side was a bowl of burning incense, and on the other a bamboo holder filled with *chi*, out of which she drank from time to time. In her left hand she held a bell and in her right the special sacred drum called *Damaru*. This is shaped like a large double egg-cup. Between its faces are attached a pair of pendent leather knobs and a long beaded flap as a handle. When the drum is held by the upper part of the handle and jerked alternately to right and left the knobs strike the faces of the drum. It is often used by Lamas to mark the pauses between different forms of worship.

The Nunjimu started by ringing the bell and playing the drum, slowly at first, with a regular rhythmic beat, at the same time chanting in a low and droning voice. After a time she increased the pace. Nothing happened for over an hour. By now the noise was maddening and reminded me of machine-gun fire: I felt a strong desire to sleep. Suddenly she gave a convulsive shudder and started to work her knees rapidly about. One or two others now came into the room, the Hlaribu amongst them. He paid no attention to what was happening and sat quietly in a corner turning his prayer-wheel. Once or twice Tafoor's wife, with the sick child on her back, came into the room to replenish the drinks, but at no time did she pay any attention to the performance. The Mun Katel was also present. He, however, was no longer sober and dozed with his head sagging down between his feet; "contemplating his anus," was how the others described it.

[1] [i.e., dough cones.--Analyst]

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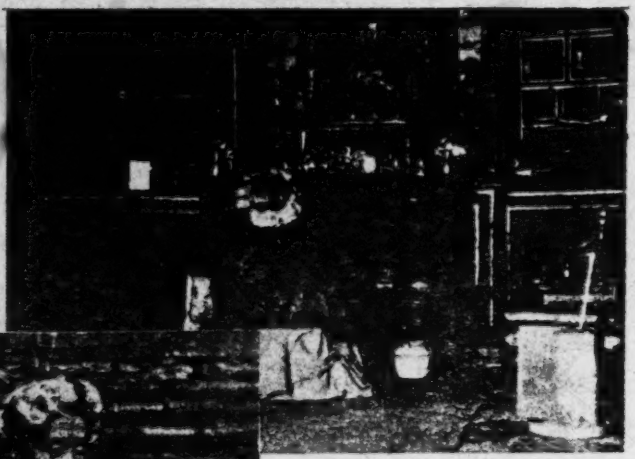

The Nunjimu attempting to induce a state of trance.

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After the divination. Note the special woollen wreath worn by the Nunjimu: also the drum and bell which she is holding.

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The sick child. This photograph also illustrates the normal method of carrying babies.

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it. A baby now made a pool on the floor; nobody took any notice, its mother merely spreading the mess with her bare foot across the boards.

The onlookers now said that the spirit had come, but I was unable to decide, either then or later, whether the Nunjimu was actually in a trance or not. I am inclined to think not, however; but it is probable that the incessant rattle had brought about a semi-hypnotic state. Certainly everyone looked half asleep. After a while she got up from the floor and started to dance, circling slowly round the room. She left her bell on the floor but still continued drumming. It was a slow rhythmic shuffle rather than a dance and reminded me of some aged ballerina trying over the steps of her youth; and failing lamentably. From time to time she turned on her heels and stamped. This caused the floor to shake and the effect was slightly impressive. All the time she went on droning, but her words were almost inaudible. At one moment the spirit was understood to have enquired what presents it was to receive. It said it had come from Nepal and could speak only the language of that country. I listened very intently but could not make out anything even remotely resembling Nepali. Gongyop asked the spirit to converse in Lepcha, at the same time lighting another of the altar lamps to emphasise the fact that this and all the other offerings had been put there in its honour.

The dance continued for about half an hour, and during its progress the Nunjimu gradually made known that the child was being troubled by Cherko Mung. It appeared, however, that its life was in no immediate danger. Tafoor afterwards told me that the cure was easy: it was merely a matter of a Mun making certain sacrifices, coupled with the reading of sacred books by a Lama. Now that the cause of the illness had been definitely established there was no further cause for worry.

The Nunjimu now returned to her former place on the floor. She never once stopped drumming, and now took up her bell again. Gradually the beat became slower and less

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

emphatic. I felt as though I was waking out of a heavy sleep: there was a strong desire to yawn, and I noticed that the others did the same. Quite suddenly the drumming ceased; and after a moment of silence one again became aware of other sounds; someone was husking rice outside the house, and fowls were scratching in the veranda. The Nunjimu took up a handful of grain and scattered it on the altar, snatched off her woollen wreath and got up from the floor. The performance was over.

While the dance was in progress I had come out from behind my screen and sat down on the floor amongst the others. The Nunjimu now expressed surprise at seeing me, and said that she had been unaware of my presence. This is the only circumstance that makes me feel that perhaps she was in a trance. I was otherwise not at all impressed; nor, I think, was Tafoor. I asked her to come outside and let me take a photograph. Katel told her not to; but she complied willingly, and even danced again for my benefit, roaring with laughter all the time. I got the impression that she did not really believe in the show herself. When it was over no one discussed what she had been saying; nor did she herself ask what the god had said. This was strange in view of the fact that she was presumed not to know what was happening while the spirit was in possession of her body. Although her speech was at times inaudible, the voice in which she spoke was her own. She had none of the tricks of the European medium, and altogether her show was as unimpressive as theirs. In due course the child recovered.

Lepchas sometimes also employ people known as Yaba and Yama, the former being the male. There were none in Lingtem; but from what I have seen of them in other places they appear to be exactly the same as Pawo and Nunjimu. They are said to be very common in Eastern Nepal and are usually members of the Limbu tribe. In Sikkim, they are found only in villages occupied by both Nepalis and Lepchas; and in the same way that the Pawo and Nunjimu were introduced from Tibet probably came to be incorporated

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

in Lepcha society through intermarriage with Nepalis.[756]

Before leaving the subjects of illness and sorcery it will be convenient to describe the Lepcha Lama in his function as healer. I have already noted that this is his principal employment, but he also takes part, of course, in the services of general worship held at the monastery from time to time. In Tibet the two functions are not generally combined: a Lama is either a sorcerer or a priest, but never both. There is of course a close connection between the two and they often work in conjunction. In Sikkim, however, this differentiation is not recognised, at least not amongst the Lingtem Lamas, and the two distinct and really quite separate functions are here combined.

During our stay in Lingtem we had frequent opportunities of seeing Tafoor at work. It would be of no interest to give the details of every ceremony we attended, for except in minor details they did not greatly differ. I propose, therefore, to describe only one such occasion; and since it is a fair sample of them all, to tell the story in some detail.

I have already mentioned that Pichi, the son of Datoop, had spent some years in Gangtok learning to be a carpenter. He finished his course and had returned to Lingtem in March. He looked thoroughly ill; anæmic and emaciated, he appeared to be wasting away. He was unable either to eat or work, and could only drag himself about with difficulty. Datoop brought him one day to see us, when he complained of pain in the heart and side. He asked if we could give him medicine, but there was nothing we could do beyond recommending him to go into Gangtok for treatment. This was shortly after our arrival; and since there were at the time many new things to see and do we thought no more about him.

Pichi, however, got steadily worse, when his father then called in Tafoor. Datoop is himself a Lama, but it would have been a breach of professional etiquette for him to prescribe for any member of his own household.

We went to the house about half-past five and found that an

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The Mun Gongyop making an offering. He is assisted by his wife, who squats on the right. The object in the saucepan is a bamboo strainer, out of which she is ladling *chi* to refill the cup which Gongyop is holding.

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Tafoor "prescribing" for Chano's wife. Chano, on the left, appears to be somewhat doubtful of the issue; or perhaps he is wondering whether he can afford the necessary "treatment."

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A *Mung-Li*, or demon's house, on the edge of a cardamom field.

[FACING p. 146]

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

[793] Tafoor does not himself stoop to the practice of love magic,
●756 and I gather that it is considered beneath the dignity of any
932 Lama of position. It is much more commonly done by a Mun; and in this case the procedure is slightly different. A small portion of the hair of both the parties is again necessary. The Mun twists the pieces together, puts them into a clean plate in front of him, and concentrates and chants throughout one whole night. This is known as *Nangyong Hyok*. It is possible to have the ceremony done in order to seduce some other person's wife or husband, but is generally only resorted to when an already married couple do not get on well together. It is not unknown for parents to have the ceremony done on behalf of children when they marry; and especially is this the case in a *mariage de convenance*. Should a mistake be made, and the wrong hair given, nothing can be done to prevent or nullify the effect: the two people concerned will be bound to fall in love. I have often wondered what would happen should the hair of two men be mixed.

171 Love magic does not appear to be commonly practised in Tibet, for none of the books on Lamaism makes any mention of it. It is, however, very popular with most Hindus, particularly Brahmans, who are frequently in the habit of taking wives young enough to be their daughters. It is popular in all parts of Nepal, where Brahman influence is strong, and has, I imagine, been incorporated into Sikkim Lamaism through contact with the people of that country.

751 Amulets are called *Sung-Bo* or *Ka-Wo*, and are of many
777 different kinds. Some of these are Tibetan, others come from Nepal or Bhutan, but all are in common use by Lepchas.

Tse-Sung are amulets for prolonging life and warding off the dangers which threaten it, while *Rim-Sung* are worn only in times of epidemics. *Kunthup-Sung* are used to ward off all sorts of general evil. *Za-Sung* is a charm for epilepsy and is worn only by those who are afflicted by this disease, in order to prevent its attacks. *Sipaha* is an amulet worn by those

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
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the "Place of Gods" via a subterranean passage, the entrance of which is a cave in the vicinity of Monphu, while the Heemos claim, that the spirit enters this way near a rock called Sing Dang, in the vicinity of the village Samdong. A different cave is said to be the entrance for the dead of the Lingsomo clan. This cave is called Dret gang and it lies near the hamlet of Rabdentsi. A legend current among the Namphagmo Lepchas claims that the dead of this clan do not go to Mt Kanchenjunga, but to the Mennam mountain, which is specially sacred to this clan. They reach the mountain through a subterranean passage the entrance of which is the Phim Leb cave near Lingmo.

The funeral ceremonies end on the seventh day after the burial. At first, on the third day some rice, *ci*, and eggs were brought to the grave and after five more days had passed, a hen is sacrificed and then some prayers are said by a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* in order to chase away all malignant spirits and to cleanse the house from all evil once more.

There was no difference between the burial ceremonies of the *Bar fong mo*, the Lepcha aristocracy, and the *A den* or common people, and the dead of both groups were treated alike. Only the funeral rites for a *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* were performed in a different way. Even today, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* is not cremated, but mostly buried according to the old custom. In his house, the dead person is dressed into the full garment of a Lepcha sorcerer and his face is covered, as customary, with a white cloth and also the coin for *Fă grŏng thing* is placed on his forehead. Around the body, all his magical instruments and drugs are spread out, the latter being kept in flat, closed baskets. Furthermore, a small ladder—"to reach with its help the *Rŭm lyang*"—dried fish and birds, the beak or at least some other part of a crane, the beak of a hornbill and numerous baskets containing various foodstuffs are laid all around the corpse. The body is later placed on a bamboo stretcher, together with all objects enumerated above and carried out by the door,—and not by an opening in the wall or floor, as done at the funeral of a common man. Then the body is carried to the grave and placed in the pit in a sitting position. On the left and right sides of the dead two magical sticks (*ceng pă ting*),[16] as used by the sorcerer during his lifetime, are placed and then also all the various paraphernalia, which had been brought on the stretcher, is laid in the grave.

The rites which follow are just like those performed at the funeral of common people. After the ceremony of calling back the *Mŭk nyam* has been carried out, also the spirit of a deceased *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* is conducted to the *Rŭm lyang*, to join the spirits of his ancestors.

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E- (1950-1951) 1952
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confusion of legends concerning Padmasambhava and the God Creator of the Lepchas, the traditions are today rather vague. According to some previous publications (e.g. Mainwaring, G.B.: A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) language, Calcutta 1878, p. XI) the name of the God Creator was *Ta she thing*. I heard however very frequently also the statement that the name of this chief god was *Tuk bo thing*, who was followed several thousand years later by another supernatural being called *Ta she thing*.

9. This most prominent mountain of Sikkim occupies a very important place in the ancient traditions of the Lepchas as well as in the religious life all Sikkimese Buddhists. For accounts of Lepcha ceremonies in honour of Mount Kanchenjunga see Gorer, G. Himalayan Village, London 1938, pp. 201—203; Morris, J.: Living with Lepchas, London 1938, pp. 274—276; R. Nebesky de Wojkowitz and G. Gorer: The use of thread-crosses in Lepcha lamaist ceremonies, The Eastern Anthropologist, Vol. IV., No. 2, Lucknow 1951, pp. 70—73. Some notes, concerning the mountain god of Kanchenjunga (Tb. *Gangs chhen mdzod lnga*, "The five glacier treasuries") as venerated by the Buddhists of Sikkim, are to be found in Ribbach, S. H.: Vier Bilder des Padmasambhava und seiner Gefolgschaft, Hamburg 1917, and Hoffmann, H.: Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Boen Religion, Akademie der Wissenschaften, Mainz 1950.

10. Compare Gorer, Himalayan Village, p. 192

11. Compare Dictionary of the Lepcha Language, p. 114b.

12. The *Bong thing* and *Mun* are the main sorcerers of the Lepchas. A *Bong thing* is always male, a *Mun* mostly female, sometimes also male. The position of *Mun* and *Bong thing* is inherited within the family, one of its members being chosen for this task by the supernaturals, who protect and at times also possess him. With the help of their guardian deities the *Bong thing* and *Mun* are able to avert and counteract the influence of malignant spirits, cure illness, etc. It is also their task to perform the numerous ceremonies, devoted to the worship of benevolent deities and to the appeasement of demons, as well as to carry out all rites connected with the more important events of Lepcha life. They are believed to be in possession of strong supernatural powers, which at times were also used to harm people. Thus the Chronicles of the Maharajas mention, that at the beginning of the 18th century several Lepcha sorcerers tried to kill by black magic the reigning fourth Maharaja, *Phyag rdor rnam rgyal*. Also to his successor *Chhos rgyal hgyur med rnam rgyal*, who had ascended the throne in 1717, some Lepcha magicians tried to show their skill: they made a knot into the water of a fountain and suspended a stone from the sky, they draw figures on the surface of water, span sand into a rope and at last they made the roofs of the Maharajas palace and a neighbouring temple meet. While the ruler with his retinue were very impressed by these miracles, some lamas who had also come to witness this spectacle, were not affected by the powers displayed and they subsequently killed the magicians, claiming that they were imposters.

Another group of Lepcha sorcerers are men called *Pa bo* (Tb. *dPa bo*) and their female counterparts, who bear the name *Nyen jo mo* (Tb. *rNal hbyor ma*). They are said to become possessed by Tibetan deities, who cause them to speak Tibetan in the trance and who advice them in matters of divination. The *Pa bo* and *Nyen jo mo* dress in Tibetan garments and they use Tibetan lama bell (*Dril bu*) and a small, two-faced drum (*rNga chhung*) as their main instruments. They preserved many traditions of the ancient, pre-Buddhist Boen faith of Tibet and their performances have therefore nothing to do with the ceremonies of the Sikkimese lamas, of whom they are entirely independent.

A third group of Lepcha sorcerers, also of minor importance, are the *Ya bo* and *Ya ma*, who are male and female respectively. They are supposed to become possessed by Limbu spirits and they therefore bear these two names, under which the Limbu sorcerers are known. Their main instruments are metal gongs and divination balls, called Yak. Certain similarities between religious practices of the Lepcha sorcerers and some ancient Tibetan customs are the reason for frequently occuring statements in books on Tibet, that the old Lepcha faith is identical with the Boen religion of that country. A comparative study of both beliefs shows however, that the Lepcha faith is certainly not identical with that form of the Boen religion, which it assumed after the commencement of its struggle with Buddhism. It seems rather that it corresponds in many points to the old shamanistic stratum of Central Asia, out of which in Tibet the Boen developed to a religion.

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Bhotanese, and others. Rheumatism is frequent, and inter- 164
mittent fevers, with ague; also violent and often fatal
remittents, almost invariably induced by sleeping in the
hot valleys, especially at the beginning and end of the
rains. The European complaints of liver and bowel disease
are all but unknown. Death is regarded with horror. The 761
dead are burnt or buried, sometimes both; much depending 764
on custom and position. Omens are sought in the entrails 787
of fowls, &c., and other vestiges of their savage origin are
still preserved, though now gradually disappearing.

The Lepchas profess no religion, though acknowledging 771
the existence of good and bad spirits. To the good they
pay no heed; "Why should we?" they say, "the good
spirits do us no harm; the evil spirits, who dwell in every
rock, grove, and mountain, are constantly at mischief,
and to them we must pray, for they hurt us." Every 756
tribe has a priest-doctor; he neither knows nor attempts
to practise the healing art, but is a pure exorcist; all [753]
bodily ailments being deemed the operations of devils,
who are cast out by prayers and invocations. Still they
acknowledge the Lamas to be very holy men, and were the [773]
latter only moderately active, they would soon convert
all the Lepchas. Their priests are called "Bijooas:"
they profess mendicancy, and seem intermediate between
the begging friars of Tibet, whose dress and attributes they
assume, and the exorcists of the aboriginal Lepchas: they
sing, dance (masked and draped like harlequins), beg,
bless, curse, and are merry mountebanks; those that affect [774]
more of the Lama Boodhist carry the "Mani," or revolving
praying machine, and wear rosaries and amulets; others
again are all tatters and rags. They are often employed
to carry messages, and to transact little knaveries. The 756
natives stand in some awe of them, and being besides of a 781

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generous disposition, keep the wallet of the Bijooa always full.

Such are some of the prominent features of this people, who inhabit the sub-Himalayas, between the Nepalese and Bhotan frontiers, at elevations of 3000 to 6000 feet. In their relations with us, they are conspicuous for their honesty, their power as carriers and mountaineers, and their skill as woodsmen; for they build a waterproof house with a thatch of banana leaves in the lower, or of bamboo in the elevated regions, and equip it with a table and bedsteads for three persons, in an hour, using no implement but their heavy knife. Kindness and good humour soon attach them to your person and service. A gloomy-tempered or morose master they avoid, an unkind one they flee. If they serve a good hills-man like themselves, they will follow him with alacrity, sleep on the cold, bleak mountain exposed to the pitiless rain, without a murmur, lay down the heavy burden to carry their master over a stream, or give him a helping hand up a rock or precipice—do anything, in short, but encounter a foe, for I believe the Lepcha to be a veritable coward.* It is well, perhaps, he is so: for if a race, numerically so weak, were to embroil itself by resenting the injuries of the warlike Ghorkas, or dark Bhotanese, the folly would soon lead to destruction.

Before leaving the Lepchas, it may be worth mentioning that the northern parts of the country, towards the Tibet frontier, are inhabited by Sikkim Bhoteeas † (or Kumpas),

* Yet, during the Ghorka war, they displayed many instances of courage: when so hard pressed, however, that there was little choice of evils.

† Bhote is the general name for Tibet (not Bhotan), and Kumpa is a large province, or district, in that country. The Bhotanese, natives of Bhotan, or of the Dhurma country, are called Dhurma people, in allusion to their spiritual chief, the Dhurma Rajah. They are a darker and more powerful race, rude, turbulent, and Tibetan in language and religion, with the worst features of those people exaggerated. The various races of Nepal are too numerous to be alluded

286 [386] --characteristic Lepcha patterns. The threads used for the weaving of cloth were formerly dyed with vegetable matter, of which likewise a few samples were brought along. Among the articles of clothing 291 301 there is a complete woman's costume with the pertinent ornaments: two large needles connected by a silver chain, a pair of earrings set with corals, as well as two necklaces -- one mainly of turquoise and the other consisting of corals and blue glass beads. A hat made of reed and types of nettle and a pair of men's earrings decorated with turquoises were acquired as especially characteristic articles of the garb formerly customary for Lepcha men.

534 [270] As far as musical instruments are concerned, the collection comprises three flutes of varying size -- one of which is a double flute -- a jewsharp, a gong with wooden drumsticks, as well as two old war drums whose cylinders consist of copper. They were presented [431] by bs Tan hdzin rnam rgyal, the sixth king of Sikkim (born 1769, ascended the throne in 1780, died in Lhasa in 1793) to the Lepcha chieftain of Sukmi, who bore the Tibetan title of "Dsöngpön" (r dzong dpon, "bailiff"), as an acknowledgment of faithful war service.

● 756 [523] A few especially valuable articles of the collection are parts of the equipment of a Mun priestess (a pouch with a carrying strap, decorated with eagles' claws, bird bills, the teeth of wild animals, and shells; plumes serving as a headdress; and parts of a rosary with a bell) which had been handed down for about three centuries in the family of a well-known Mun priestess who died a few years ago: Norkit [796] Lepchani from the village of Seket. This equipment, of which only one similar specimen is known in Sikkim, was occasionally used by a Mun priestess in the king's palace at Gangtok during the ceremonies that take place annually in the night before the ceremony of the Lama dance in honor of the mountain god Gangs chhen mdzod lnga. In re- 756 771 gard to other objects used in the original pre-Buddhist religion of the Lepchas, which were likewise acquired, the following should be named: amulets, magic wands, little baskets for keeping substances for magic healing, a little scaling ladder [Steigbaum] used at the burial of the [766] Lepcha priests known as Bong thing, which was supposed to aid the soul of the Bong thing in its ascent to heaven -- one of the many evidences of the shaman ideas that are deeply rooted in the Lepcha religion --, a gong used by the Yaba priests, and paraphernalia for performing ceremonies in honor of the ancestral spirits, local divinities, and for the appeasement of the demons that were unleashed during the wars of the priests during which they used magic.

776 say the Lepchas, the good spirits never do us any harm; it is only the malignant spirits which we have to fear. To propitiate the most malitious of the evil spirits are priests and [756] priestesses or rather wizards, all of whom are absolutely illiterate — unable to read or write. And their ritual is of the most elementary and loosest kind. They live like the [178] ordinary members of the tribe and have no temples, for the Lepchas have no images nor [177] any visible objects of devotion, though lately some of them occasionally worship in Lama-temples.

756 The priest is called *Bong-ting* or 'Lord-Oracle' literally 'Mouth-Lord' [1]); the mouth-piece of communication between the poor Lepcha and the Great Spirit. But more in demand than the priest is the priestess, the *Mâân* or *Mâân-mak*, who may be the wife of the Bong-ting, though not necessarily so; and both of these offices are usually hereditary. [153] This priestess or priest is resorted to in every case of serious disease, for the Lepcha believes that disease is always one to the machinations of an evil spirit and he has no faith at all in medicines. In the priestly rites there is no dancing as in the Shamanistic Bon of Central Asia. In their worship, which is of fear and not love, they invoke the *Mung* or other evil spirit by cutting a bamboo into pieces and sticking the pieces into the ground with bits of stone Then they propitiate the spirit with sacrifice of a fowl or a, pig, and implore it to release its victim. Occasionally they perform sympathetic magic in cases of severe pain by drawing blood with a dry knife or spike of bamboo, without wounding the skin, like the Pawang wizards of the Malay Archipelago [2]). And so highly are these poor aboriginal priests esteemed, even by the immigrant Tibetans in Sikhim, that these latter, although professing the superior Lamaism, frequently condescend to employ these Lepcha priests and priestesses, in the belief that the latter hold especially close relations with the indigenous spirits of the country. It is a question how far this partiality for female priests may be a survival of the matriarchy before referred to, or whether it may be owing to most of the malignant divinities being female and so requiring a female priest.

533 Coming now to the songs themselves, we see that they are idyllic in character. Their words refer mostly to the inscrutable mystery of the origin and destiny of man and the primitive passion of love. It is curious to notice how they gratefully associate themselves [824] with the Bamboo, whose stout stem supplies them with the sheltering frame-work, walls and thatch of their huts, with fuel, bows and arrows; its larger joints afford water-jugs, cooking pots and pans; its smaller joints supply bottles, smoking pipes and flutes; its branches make a springy couch; its bark supplies baskets, umbrellas and ropes, and its [534] tender shoots are eaten as food. The songs are sung usually to the accompaniment of a flute or a sort of Jew's harp. This small harp is also used by the Nâgas and other Malayan races. It is made of bamboo and decorated by curving or burned in 'poker'-work with a plaited or basket-pattern. It is called *Tang-dyu* — the name *Tang* being apparently onomatopoetic for the twanging sound it produces. The flute called *Po-lit* is also of bamboo as its name denotes and it is decorated like the harp.

The melody of two of the chief of these songs I am able to give here through the

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[1]) This title is practically identical with the 'Gods' mouth (*Hla-k'a*) of the Bon religion. Cf. my Buddhism of Tibet p. 482. The term *Yok* or *Yok-mas* is usually applied to the Lamas and Nepalese priests, and may be a corruption of the Indian *Yogi*. An assistant-priest is called *Tipol-bo*.

[2]) Malay Sketches by F. A. Swettenham, London 1895.